

Bechtel appeal has merit, says GAO

The Government Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, has ruled in favor of Bechtel in its appeal of the award of Hanford's River Corridor Contract to another bidder. The contract, designed to accelerate risk reduction and closure of the 210-square-mile Columbia River corridor of the Hanford Site, was awarded last April to Washington Closure Company, a partnership of Washington Group International, Fluor Federal Services and Earth Tech. Bechtel filed a protest on May 5.

According to GAO attorney Scott Riback, the Aug. 13 ruling means that DOE now must review the criteria used in awarding the contract and re-evaluate the bids. In the meantime, Bechtel Hanford will continue its work on cleaning up the rivershore and cocooning Hanford's obsolete reactors — work it has performed since 1994, earning 13 outstanding ratings from DOE.

"We're going to continue focusing on job safety and meeting our cleanup commitments," said Todd Nelson of Bechtel Hanford's communications staff.

When the new contract is in place, the first phase will include cocooning three defunct plutonium production reactors, remediating 269 waste sites and 46 burial grounds, and taking down surplus buildings. The contract includes an unpriced option for performance of a second phase, which includes cocooning three additional reactors, remediating four burial grounds and 240 waste sites, and demolishing 218 surplus facilities.

The two phases of the contract will complete the lion's share of Hanford rivershore remediation and shrink active Hanford cleanup operations to just 75 square miles in the center of the site. ■